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BACKGROUND NO. 1-0475  
MARK HOPKINS/MUNICH

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SOLZHENITSYN'S EUROPEAN TV TOUR

ANNCR:

SOVIET NOBEL PRIZE WINNING AUTHOR ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN, NOW IN EXILE, HAS BEEN TRAVELING IN WESTERN EUROPE, WARNING OF A BLEAK FUTURE FOR THE WEST AGAINST SOVIET POWER. HIS WARNINGS HAVE PRODUCED MIXED REACTIONS, AS WE HEAR IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM VOA CORRESPONDENT MARK HOPKINS IN OUR EUROPEAN BUREAU.

VOICE:

SINCE HIS EXILE TWO YEARS AGO, ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN HAS MOSTLY ABSORBED HIMSELF WITH A CHRONICLING OF STALINISM, WITH THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF SOVIET POLITICS AND TERROR, AND THEIR VICTIMS.

BUT BESIDES THE BOOKS THAT WON HIM A NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE, MISTER SOLZHENITSYN HAS GONE TO THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC IN PERSON TO SOUND THE ALARM - MOST RECENTLY IN TELEVISION INTERVIEWS IN LONDON, PARIS AND MADRID, THESE REACHING MASS AUDIENCES.

MISTER SOLZHENITSYN'S THEME IS THE MORAL DECAY OF THE WEST, THE GROWING SOVIET POWER AND THE SPREAD OF TOTALITARIAN RULE. HE SAID DURING THE LONDON B-B-C INTERVIEW - "I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED AT THE SUDDEN AND IMMINENT FALL OF THE WEST... THE SOVIET UNION'S ECONOMY IS ON SUCH A WAR FOOTING THAT EVEN IF IT WERE THE UNANIMOUS OPINION OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO NOT TO START A WAR, THIS WOULD NO LONGER BE IN THEIR POWER."

MISTER SOLZHENITSYN'S DREARY ASSESSMENT OF THE WEST HAS PRODUCED MIXED REACTIONS. THE SOVIET OFFICIAL PRESS HAS PREDICTABLY DENOUNCED HIM ALL ALONG. BUT A FELLOW SOVIET DISSIDENT, HISTORIAN ROY MEDVEDEV, HAS TAKEN ISSUE WITH MISTER SOLZHENITSYN, DEFENDING THE IDEA OF LIBERAL REFORM OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM. OTHERWISE SYMPATHETIC VOICES IN THE WEST HAVE BEEN UNEASY WITH MISTER SOLZHENITSYN'S COMMENTS. BRITISH PRIME MINISTER HAROLD WILSON TOLD PARLIAMENT THAT HE REJECTED MISTER SOLZHENITSYN'S REMARKS THAT BRITAIN HAS LOST ITS WILL. AFTER MISTER SOLZHENITSYN SAID POST-FRANCO SPAIN HAS MORE FREEDOMS THAN IMAGINABLE IN THE SOVIET UNION, EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONS CRITICIZED HIM FOR DEFENDING AUTHORITARIAN SPAIN.

THE LONDON NEWSPAPER, DAILY MIRROR, ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER MISTER SOLZHENITSYN WANTS RE-ARMAMENT AND A WAR OF LIBERATION TO FREE CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY OF RUSSIAN DOMINATION. U.S. SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY, INTERVIEWED BY B-B-C AFTER MISTER SOLZHENITSYN'S REMARKS, SAID THE WEST OUGHT TO EMPHASIZE ITS STRENGTHS, MAKING CLEAR THAT HE THOUGHT THE WEST IS NOT COLLAPSING. THE FRENCH NEWS AGENCY A-F-P COMMENTED THAT MISTER SOLZHENITSYN'S "TOLSTOY-LIKE INSISTENCE ON SPIRITUAL MATTERS, HIS FIGHT FOR THE GOOD AGAINST THE EVIL REPRESENTED IN HIS EYES BY THE SOVIET CONCENTRATION CAMPS, SEEM ABOVE PEOPLE'S HEADS."

SO MISTER SOLZHENITSYN'S WARNINGS, ABOUT THE WEST, ABOUT THE SOVIET UNION HAVE STIRRED IN SOME AN OPPOSITE REACTION - AND FROM QUARTERS THAT HAVE HAILED HIM AS A CHAMPION OF FREEDOM, UNTIL HE TURNED HIS EYES IN THEIR

DIRECTION. THE ESSAYIST BERNARD LEVIN, WRITING IN THE TIMES OF LONDON, SAID THE REASON FOR THE REACTION IS THAT EVEN AS MISTER SOLZHENITSYN "SPEAKS OF EXTERNAL DANGERS - MISTER LEVIN SAYS - HE FORCES HIS HEARERS TO LOOK WITHIN THEMSELVES FOR THE ULTIMATE CAUSES OF THOSE DANGERS."

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